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ABSTRACT

Communication skills should be a basic part of any career education program but often are not classified as such, rather, these skills are included under other goals and objectives. In general, the major approach of the National Institute of Education to career education programs has been based on research into four areas: school models for K-14 curriculum development, an experience-based model for secondary school student work programs, a home-community model to provide resources for school dropouts and adults, and a residential-based model aimed at teaching new skills to members of disadvantaged rural families. A specific task force sponsored by the Speech Communication Association is focusing its efforts on three areas for communication research in career education: (1) defining skills that are directly job-related, as distinct from general competencies; (2) studying the relationship of interpersonal communication skills to career decision making; and (3) providing schools with information about careers that are definite possibilities for communication majors. (RN)

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SCA AND CAREER COMMUNICATION: A STATUS REPORT

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SCA AND CAREER COMMUNICATION: A STATUS REPORT

This report deals with the latest priorities in career education established by the National Institute of Education and other agencies, and with the relationship of the work of the Career Education Task Force of SCA to those priorities.

1.0 Status of Career Education

In the less than three years that have elapsed since Sidney Marland, as newly-named U. S. Commissioner of Education, presented the general outlines of a national Career Education theme before the annual meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Houston, some important developments and several changes in focus have taken place. Let me summarize these briefly.

Marland himself stated, "...Career Education seeks to remove the assumed distinctions between academic and occupational learning programs, blending them to serve all learners at all levels of instruction in their quest for productive careers and rewarding lives."[1]

Roughly a year later, Marland assembled a panel of critics -- some 20 leaders from public education, psychology, economics, labor, business, and the scholarly professions -- to review and criticize the career education concept and the efforts of USOE to implement it. Their responses, which helped shape subsequent developments, are contained as essays in a document issued in April, 1973, by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Although Marland has declined to lay out a concrete federal definition of Career Education or to suggest a federal "approved solution," certain concepts have emerged which have been generally accepted:

1. Career education is not the same as vocational education.
2. The concept of career education should be an organizing core of the instruction from primary grades through community college.
3. Career education should move through at least three phases K-14: career awareness, career orientation, and career exploration, corresponding roughly to elementary, junior high, and high school/ post-high school levels.
4. A major goal of career education is "to enable every person to make informed choices as he develops his own career." [2]

This last point is emphasized by James Spradley, an anthropologist, who conceives of a career as "the course of one's life." Although occupations are a major feature, he points out that "A career is progress along a pathway, not arrival at a destination. What must be stressed is the lifelong process in contrast to a single decision at one point in time." [3] Related concepts of multiple careers and career change must also be considered, with informed choice a crucial notion.

In 1971, OE's research and development programs were reoriented to focus on planning and designing alternate approaches to elementary and secondary schooling. At that time, four models of Career Education were proposed for study:

1. A school-based model to infuse the K-14th grade curriculum and related programs with a Career Education thrust;

2. An employer-based model to give secondary level students a comprehensive alternative to the traditional academic environment;
3. A home/community-based model to offer career-oriented resources to out-of-school youth and adults who are not participating in regular school programs or who want additional learning opportunities;
4. A residential-based model designed to provide a variety of life skills for disadvantaged rural families.

In 1971 and 1972, a national effort was launched. Approximately $42.1 million in federal funds were allocated to Career Education in 1972. Each state began demonstration and experimental projects with financial support under Parts C and D of the Vocational Education Act.

By spring 1973, it appeared that whether or not Career Education was to be a "new, vitalizing thrust in education," as put by Dr. Keith Goldhammer, Dean of the School of Education at Michigan State University, there was certainly going to be considerable R & D money available. Local districts were in many cases making a strong commitment to introduce career education into their curricula without federal funding. And the National Institute of Education published a Forward Plan for Career Education, [5] drawing on papers prepared a year ago by the Rand Corporation and the Educational Policy Research Center of Syracuse University.

A number of changes have taken place in the last few months, modifying some of the earlier concepts and, in some instances, changing the priorities. Without

going into detail on the intervening developments, let me summarize the state of affairs as of 4:00 p.m., PST, October 31, 1973. (The precise dating is not just a semantic nicety. Changes can and do occur overnight, often in the course of the frequent conferences held between NIE and directors and evaluators of the R & D models.)

1.1 Target population

There is a strong move on to narrow the focus, at least of the R & D efforts, to two groups: (a) disaffected and alienated youth, and (b) adults in mid-career or entering the labor market for the first time in middle age, particularly women and members of ethnic minorities.

This change has been greeted with considerable disfavor by state department task force members and county and district educators.

1.2 NIE

The responsibility for the four career education models referred to earlier was transferred from OE to NIE. Until a short time ago, the Center for Vocational and Technical Education at Ohio State University had the contract for the school-based model, which was being developed and field-tested under subcontracts in six sites around the country. That program has been suddenly "de-funded." Although Ohio State University still has some funds under the contract, all activity has ceased at the six model sites*; none of their materials will be released until further notice, and the future of these models is unknown.[6]

NIE is continuing its major R & D thrust for FY 74 (fiscal 1974) through the four model II sites. The name of this model has been changed from "Employer-Based

* Since this was written, I have found that this statement is not accurate. Some funds appear to be available for testing curricular materials, but precise details are not forthcoming at this writing.

Career Education" to "Experience-Based Career Education." The models are now operational, and are being field-tested for stability, replicability, transportability, and cost/effectiveness, during the current school year (1973-74).*

These models have had mixed acceptance by local school districts. Although they draw students from one or more districts, and the graduates receive regular diplomas, the students have all of their learning experiences outside of the school plant and under jurisdiction of others than regular teachers. For example, in the Far West Laboratory model, which is operated as the Far West School in Oakland, California, students have a completely individualized program under the guidance of advisors, and most of their instruction takes place with resource persons in large or small employer organizations.

Some difficulties have arisen because local educational agencies, on the one hand, do not want to lose state attendance funds; and on the other hand, employers do not want to take the responsibility for managing the educational effort.

Originally, the NIE guidelines provided for a complete separation of the Model II development from the local schools. Within the last three months, however, there has been a change, and the models must now demonstrate the feasibility and cost/effectiveness of transporting the program back into a local school system, while still maintaining the unique features of the model.

The other two models -- home/community-based and residential-based -- are much more limited in scope, and up-to-date information is difficult to obtain. The thrust of the home/community-based model is to penetrate the homes via the mass media, particularly TV. I have no information on its effectiveness.

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*The four Model II contractors are Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and Research for Better Schools.

In addition to the foregoing models, NIE will also be awarding grants for field-initiated studies in career education. The deadline for such applications has not yet been announced.

1.3 USOE

A separate but related set of activities has been taking place under OE sponsorship, funded under Part C of the Vocational Education Act, and administered by the several state departments of education in selected demonstration sites. For example, in California there are 25 school districts in 10 geographical areas, in which many kinds of curricular and support components are being developed and field-tested, with particular attention to infusion strategies, or methods of implementation. In these demonstration sites, varying combinations of approaches are being tested -- in early childhood education, scheduling, curriculum, guidance services, work experience programs, community involvement, and program management.

Each state has a departmental task force to direct the demonstration programs. In California, the task force is multi-disciplinary. As we move east, they become more vocationally oriented. The implementation strategies change from state to state and from site to site.[7]

Last year, about $14 million dollars was allocated to these demonstration sites from Part C funds. This allocation expires October 1974, and the funds will revert to Vocational Education.

According to William Pierce, deputy U.S. commissioner for occupational and adult education, USOE's new Center for Career Education will work closely with NIE in that agency's research. Pierce says that USOE does "not subscribe to NIE's narrow

view of career education," and he has designated fiscal 1974 as a year of evaluation for career education. [8]

1.4 Local educational agencies

A considerable effort which has gone largely unnoticed nationally is supported by local school district and county offices. These are Career Centers, most of them located in high schools, but many now being planned for junior high and elementary schools. They are usually large resource rooms, where students may find career information, view printed or multi-media materials, or have rap sessions with teachers, paraprofessional aides, and volunteers from the business community. Teachers may bring classes to the centers, or students may do individual or group research.

Career Centers are locally funded through PTA's, Regional Occupational Programs, ESEA Title I, Early Childhood Education, or any other available sources. In many districts, the Career Centers are the only tangible evidence of the concern for career education. When federal funding ceases, the Centers may well be the only means by which the concepts of career education can make an impact on students.

2.0 Communication and career education

There is widespread acceptance of the fact that communication skills (whatever those may be) should be an integral part of career education programs. The school-based models, as well as local career education programs that I have examined, all include some reference to communication skills.

Some idea of the definition and scope of communication skills within the context of career education may be obtained from those listed in the operating plan of one of the Experience-Based Career Education Models. [9] Under Basic Skills are listed goals and objectives for reading, writing, oral communication, media, and quantitative skills. The goal for oral communication reads: "The student can communicate orally in a manner both effective and appropriate to various situations

(social, academic, or vocational)." [10] Sample objectives listed are:

1. The student can organize and present useful answers to questions about which he has information.
2. The student can organize and present verbally ideas or solutions to problems encountered in vocational, educational, and/or avocational pursuits.
3. The student can comprehend and also give directions.
4. The student can use the techniques of effective listening to obtain information needed to engage in learning activities at FWS and to pursue educational and career goals. [11]

Informal methods of assessing students' communication needs are to be used, and if students need additional work in communication, they can accomplish their objectives through working with appropriate resource persons in employer-based sites, and/or doing projects within a communications and media package, which has not yet been developed. No one on the staff has particular expertise in speech communication; the communications workshop held last year was conducted by a staff member who is a professional writer.

An interesting aspect of this EBCE curriculum is that many skills that we would classify as communication skills are listed under Life Skills, defined as "necessary behaviors which help individuals to relate effectively with the economic sector and other life roles in a personal and self-fulfilling manner..." [12]

The core life skills listed are: interpersonal, inquiry, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

It is interesting to note that many of the objectives listed under the goals for these skills are similar to those included in courses in interpersonal communication. In interpersonal skills are listed such items as awareness of basic concepts

in human relationships, role structures, stereotyping, tolerance for individual differences, opinions, and beliefs, employment of effective discussion and other techniques for conflict resolution, interaction with persons in authority, techniques of effective leadership, negotiating, and supervising group activities.

Under inquiry skills, the student is to recall, observe, compare/contrast, classify, define, interpret, generalize, infer, hypothesize, predict, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Likewise, the decision-making and problem-solving skills listed are those often taught in high school and college in the context of speech communication.

I have gone into some detail in this particular career education model because I believe that it typifies certain ideas regarding communication by those outside of our field.

1. There is a general acceptance that communication skills are important and should be a part of the basic career education curriculum.
2. Communication skills and objectives listed tend to be general and superficial in character.
3. Objectives listed under goals <u>other</u> than communication often include many that we would consider part of a speech communication curriculum.

3.0 The SCA Task Force on Career Education

The present SCA task force, consisting of Barbara Lieb-Brilhart, Don Ecroyd, Kathleen Galvin, and myself, was formed at the SCA summer conference on career education in July 1972, and was charged with the responsibility of submitting a research proposal to USOE. With the shift of research funding to NIE, and the changes in priorities, the task force has modified its original intentions somewhat. To date, we have accomplished the following:

1. Undertaken an extensive search of the literature vectoring on communication models, career education guidance and planning, and the relation of communication to job competencies.
2. Developed the specifications for a research proposal to be submitted to NIE or other appropriate funding source.
3. Outlined the contents for an article, to be written by Barbara Lieb-Brilhart, developing a theoretical model of career communication and setting a conceptual framework for communication and career decision-making.
4. Outlined the specifications for an article on Communication Responses to Career Education Needs, which I am now working on.

4.0 Potential for career communication research

At present, we see at least three potential areas for communication research and development related to career education.

4.1 There is a need to identify and define those communication competencies that are directly job-related, as distinct from the general communication skills that are desirable for everyone to have.

Although there have been some attempts to define such competencies, few of them have been based upon job task analyses. Some studies have dealt with employer preferences for certain communication styles or dialects. Others have asked employers to rate the importance of communication (along with such other skills as math and reading) for certain job categories. The Far West Laboratory has conducted an extensive job task analysis to identify the competencies, including those in communication, needed for Development, Dissemination, and Evaluation Specialists in educational research and development.

The SCA task force is now working on a proposal to analyze a sample of occupations, requiring differing degrees of involvement with data, people, and things, for the specific communication competencies which are essential to the performance of the tasks in that job. The information from such a study can be used to develop training modules and to serve as guidelines for career information and decision-making for high school and college students interested both in entry-level positions and in advancement up the career ladder. It is probably a truism to say that, no matter how technical or non-communication oriented a job may be at the entry level, upward mobility in a career usually entails greater and greater degrees of ability to communicate and to interact with people in problem-solving and leadership roles.

4.2 A second need is for research into the relationship of inter- and intra-personal communication competencies to career decision-making. Regardless of the specific

form that career education models and centers will take in the future, the field of career counseling is receiving more and more attention. Most career counselors in schools have their training in vocational education or in educational psychology. They are prepared to assist students with job market information, or with making career decisions based upon interest inventories and the like. They are not prepared to recognize or assist with those intrapersonal communication needs which relate to career decision-making.

SCA task force members are developing a theoretical model and conceptual papers on this matter, which will be submitted to speech journals for publication in the near future.

4.3 A third major need is to make available to the schools information about careers that are possible for communication majors. Career education already recognizes that one of the 16 major career clusters is "communication and media," although to many people that means mainly journalism and the mass media. However, many other occupational fields are open to people highly skilled in communication. Some of these were indicated at the 1972 SCA summer conference in Chicago -- at that time, it was suggested that it would be well for speech communication majors to know about such career possibilities, and that college and university speech departments should make a special effort to make such information available to their students.

Beyond that, however, our field should be much more actively involved in developing curricular guides and instructional materials in communication for vocational and career education programs. We should be supplying brochures and resource

5.4 Dissemination

Provision of information and guidelines for career education planning and research utilization. Some studies suggested here include the use of media to present careers, with particular reference to elimination of sex and ethnic stereotyping.

There are many opportunities in each of the foregoing areas for research or development in speech communication.

6.0 Summary

The status of funding and priorities for career education are in a state of flux, with new pronouncements appearing regularly. Responsibility is divided between OE and NIE, and when the money for vocational education is withdrawn from career education projects, OE's efforts and those of the task forces in several state departments will be sharply curtailed.

NIE's major funding efforts this year have been on the operational phases of the four Experience-Based Career Education models, with heavy emphasis on their cost/effectiveness, transportability, and infusion into existing school systems. Their orientation is mainly research. Although NIE's guidelines for field-initiated studies in March 1973 (which were not for career education) specifically stated that they did not wish training packages or an emphasis on development, recent information which the SCA office has received directly from NIE staff indicates that the guidelines for career education proposals, due in a month or so, will include such development studies.

It should be stressed again that there is no general definition of career education. Narrow interpretations relate it to making decisions about careers and acquiring the skills needed for entry into the job market. The broadest interpretations make career education synonymous with all education, with the choice of and pursuit of a purposeful life pattern or style, and with an educational

process that helps the individual plan and achieve a fulfilling life. [14]

The future of career education, then, is not clear. On the national and local scenes, it will probably continue to be subject to political pressures, changing concepts of scope and emphasis, conflict between OE and NIE, and shifts in funding patterns.

Nevertheless, the SCA task force considers that speech communication has important contributions to make to career education, and we shall continue our present efforts to complete a research proposal and to develop a theoretical model of career communication.

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